

Cabinet – 8 February 2006

Corporate Plan 2006-2007

Portfolio: Councillor Tom Ansell, Leader of the Council

Service Area: Corporate

Wards: All

Forward Plan: Yes

Summary of report

This report presents the Council's corporate plan for 2006/7. This plan sets out the main objectives the Council will be pursuing over the year, to improve the services the Council provides to citizens and to make Walsall a better place.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to approve the Corporate Plan as a key part of the Council's policy framework, and to refer it on to Council for adoption.

Resource and legal considerations

The Council pledges and key service actions identified in the corporate plan are accounted for within the draft 2006/7 budget, also presented for approval at tonight's meeting.

Citizen impact

The achievement of the Council's pledges and key service actions set out in the corporate plan will significantly improve local services for the benefit of residents. The achievement of the pledges will enable local people to judge how well the Council is doing and it is intended will lead to improved customer satisfaction. Feedback on progress will be provided to citizens in the Council's publication, Walsall Pride.

Community safety

One of the Council's ten strategic priorities is to *ensure all people are safe and secure*, and two pledges are directly targeted at improving community safety.

Environmental impact

Ensure a clean and green borough is one of the Council's ten strategic priorities and two pledges are directly linked to this priority. There are also a number of other pledges which will improve the road network and the environment in the town centre.

Performance and risk management issues

The Council has a hierarchy of plans to ensure that high level corporate priorities are translated into more detailed plans throughout the organisation. The Corporate Plan sets out high level corporate priorities and this plan is underpinned by directorate, service and team plans which set out more specific targets and improvements which are necessary in order to achieve our priorities. All pledges and key actions will be identified in the appropriate directorate, service and team plans, currently being finalised for the year ahead. These plans are risk assessed as an integral part of service planning processes.

The pledges set out in this Plan will be monitored by the Executive Management Team, with regular reviews presented to Cabinet as part of the Beacon Index. This plan will also be subject to review via scrutiny and performance panels and will be built into their work plans for 2006/7 as appropriate.

Equality implications

Equality is an integral theme within Vision 2008, with our commitment to build an inclusive borough where cultural diversity is recognised as one of Walsall's key strengths. The Plan makes specific reference to the Race Equality Scheme and Equality and Diversity Strategy of the Council, and to work at directorate, service and team level, for instance equality impact assessments, undertaken to ensure that our services meet the needs of all local residents.

Consultation

Vision 2008 was developed in 2003 and adopted in January 2004 following extensive consultation with partners, staff and residents. Views have been sought and obtained of partners on the Corporate Plan for 2005/6, and the present plan reflects feedback, including as it does more information on equality and diversity, and signposts to other key local plans and strategies, and other information about the council.

Vision 2008

The corporate plan includes the Council's vision for Walsall. It also sets out the pledges and actions which the Council, working with its partners, will take over the year which will help to realise this vision.

Background papers

All published.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Signed

Executive Director – David Martin

Date 27 January 2006

A handwritten signature in black ink, written in a cursive style, appearing to read 'T Ansell'.

Signed

Leader of the Council – Councillor T Ansell

Date 30 January 2006

Walsall Council

Corporate Plan

2006 - 2007

February 2006

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Corporate Plan 2006-2007

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1. Setting the scene

We are delighted to introduce Walsall Council's corporate plan for 2006/07.

Last year was a momentous year for the council. In line with our vision for the borough, we have continued to move forward, focussing on key issues and priorities for local people, delivering quality services that meet the needs and expectations of citizens. In December 2005, when the Audit Commission issued its latest performance ratings for local councils, we received three stars, and were judged to be improving well, showing that we remain on course for our goal of being recognised locally and nationally as an excellent council by 2008. To achieve this, we must maintain our momentum, and this plan sets out how we will do this over the year ahead, maintaining our focus on improving our services and making Walsall a better place.

The plan reflects the council's vision for Walsall in 2008 which was developed in 2003 and adopted in 2004 following extensive consultation. For the year ahead, our vision remains the same. It is of a borough that is prosperous, forward-looking, self confident and optimistic – a place where individuals and groups can thrive and develop. If we are to achieve this ambition we need to address the key priorities for local residents, for example wanting to live in safer, greener and cleaner neighbourhoods. We also need to address some fundamental issues for our organisation – transforming the way we work for the benefit of the community that we serve. Our priorities are included in this plan, along with a set of key pledges, tangible evidence that we are focussing our energy on what matters.

This plan will:

- Focus the efforts of all the employees of the council on the issues that matter to citizens
- Ensure we put resources firmly behind their priorities
- Strengthen our joint working with our partners
- Enable local people and our partners to judge how well we are doing and whether we are achieving our objectives.

This year we look forward to working with our partners in the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership to fulfil our shared aspirations as set out in the Community Plan for the Borough, launched last September. The new Local Area Agreement with government will help us in this task, and will ensure that we are all working together to achieve our common goals, focussed on key targets and on what really matters. This plan, our own Corporate Plan, sets out the part that the council will play in the collective efforts of the Borough Partnership.

We hope you find this plan interesting and informative. We are grateful for the comments and feedback received about last year's Corporate Plan, and we have made some changes to address those comments. We would welcome your comments on this year's plan. Please send any comments to LeaderoftheCouncil@walsall.gov.uk or to AnnieShepperd@walsall.gov.uk.

Councillor Tom Ansell
Leader of the Council

Annie Shepperd
Chief Executive

2. Our vision of Walsall in 2008 - our priorities, and our pledges for 2006-07

In 2004, following detailed consultation with local people and with local agencies and organisations, we launched our vision of the sort of place we want Walsall to become by 2008. This vision was based around ten priorities, each of which is critical to our achieving the type of community we are aiming to build in our borough. This Plan sets out our priorities; and describes how the council is working with the community and our partners to achieve our vision.

Our strategic priorities between now and 2008 are to:

1. Ensure a clean and green borough
2. Make it easier for people to get around
3. Ensure all people are safe and secure
4. Make our schools great
5. Make Walsall a healthy and caring place
6. Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall
7. Make it easier to access local services
8. Strengthen the local economy
9. Listen to what local people want
10. Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority

We believe these are critical issues for a successful Walsall that will demand sustained effort to 2008, and in the years beyond. We are already committed to working with our partners to deliver the Community Plan for the borough, through to 2010 (*see section 5*) and, through the Borough Strategic Partnership, we are now undertaking a major consultation exercise, across the borough, seeking to engage all with an interest and a stake in the long term future of Walsall, to develop a vision of Walsall in the year 2021.

Our own vision for 2008 is a major contributor to the future of our borough, and we believe that the set of 20 pledges set out here, each one linked to our of our 10 strategic priorities, provide clear evidence of significant progress in key areas and of service improvement over the next 12 months:

Ensure a clean and green borough

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will reduce litter and dog fouling by issuing more spot fines

- We will increase the amount of household waste that is recycled or composted to 27.5%, setting an example by launching recycling schemes for all council buildings, and providing at least 300 more home composting kits

Make it easier for people to get around

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will improve the condition of the highway network by surface treating 55km (35 miles) of the borough's roads
- We will reduce congestion by beginning construction of the ring road around Walsall town centre

Ensure all people are safe and secure

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will ensure that people in all parts of the borough feel safe in their homes by improving security including gates, fencing and lighting
- We will provide, with our partners, a programme of stimulating and exciting summer activities for our children and young people

Make our schools great

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will increase the number of children getting 5 GCSE A* - C grades including English and Maths
- We will increase the number of 11 year olds achieving level 4 or above in English by 4% and in Maths by 7%

Make Walsall a healthy and caring place

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will increase the number of vulnerable households living in Decent Homes in the private sector to 67.7% of all vulnerable households
- We will reduce the conception rate for under 18 year olds by 16.7% compared to 2003 levels

Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will spend £3 million on improvements to our school buildings
- We will make improvements to our libraries, including Forest Gate (New Invention), Aldridge and Brownhills

Make it easier to access local services

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will make our planning services available 24 hours a day, through the internet
- We will support people with disabilities by increasing the proportion of small items of occupational therapy equipment delivered within 7 working days of the assessment of need

Strengthen the local economy

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will establish a Town Centre Management scheme in Walsall town centre and deliver key improvements in our district centres of Brownhills, Aldridge, Willenhall, Bloxwich and Darlaston
- We will work with our partners to ensure new development maximises economic and educational opportunities for the residents of the borough

Listen to what local people want

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- Local Neighbourhood Partnerships will each identify three specific environmental improvements, important to their area, to support the Local Area Agreement
- We will actively support the involvement of young people in the work of the council through Youth Opinions Unite, and ensure there is a minimum of 10 meetings a year between councillors, council officers and young people

Transform Walsall into an excellent authority

Our pledge for the year ahead is that:

- We will work with partners: with Centro to improve the public transport infrastructure including local bus shelters, and with the Fire Service to reduce accidental fires and arson
- We will improve the provision of information about our services to local residents, making sure it is helpful, accurate and reliable, using Walsall Pride and other innovative ways

3. Listening to local people

For our services to meet the needs of local residents, and of the community at large, it is essential that our plans and policies reflect the views of local people, and others who use our services. We aim to be a listening organisation and we use a wide range of methods to understand better what matters to residents. This section highlights some of the consultation activities we have been involved in over the past year, key themes that have emerged and outlines how we will continue to develop our approach to consultation and engagement in the year ahead.

The council has undertaken a great deal of consultation activity over the past 12 months and we have worked hard to develop and improve the many different ways in which we listen to local people. We have sought resident views using many different approaches, ranging from traditional survey and focus group work to more unusual approaches including mystery shopper exercises, interactive displays and community modelling, 'Placecheck', visioning events and workshops. As a result, we have amassed a great deal of information which has enabled us to critically assess our current performance and identify areas for further improvement, influencing future plans and budgets. Some of the key themes and messages identified include:

Continued recognition of improvements to services being delivered to local people

- 56% of a recent citizens' panel survey indicated that they were satisfied with the way that the council runs things, an increase of 22% from a similar survey in 2003
- 83% were satisfied with provision of street lighting & collection services
- 78% of respondents from the citizens' panel recognise that recycling has improved

Better and increased communication with residents providing appropriate information

- 69% of respondents feel the Council keeps residents well informed about the services and benefits that it provides
- 67% believe the council provides just the right amount of information
- 63% satisfied with the ease with which they found the right person

All ten elements of Vision 2008 still considered to be priorities

- 72% of the citizens' panel confirmed that all aspects of Vision 2008 are important to them. Of the ten vision priorities, nine were important to over four fifths of the citizens' panel membership
- Ensuring all people are safe and secure; listening to what local people want; making our schools great and a clean and green borough were identified as the key priorities within Vision 2008 during budget consultation 2006/2007

Priority areas for improvement

- Clean streets; activities for teenagers and young people, road and pavement repairs and reducing levels of crime were all identified through the citizens' panel as important for improving local areas to live
- Waste collection services, roads and pavements, fly tipping, open spaces, young people, crime & anti-social behaviour, condition of school buildings, health services,

education provision, job opportunities and the overall image of Walsall were all identified as important priorities through budget consultation 2006/2007

In 2006-07, we will:

- Build upon our 9 Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) so that, working with residents, we develop local action plans to reflect local priorities
- Make full use of our citizens' panel of 1250 residents, undertaking several further surveys providing strategic information on current issues and priorities
- Work closely with our partners including comm. unity and voluntary organisations to roll out our Local Compact (see chapter 5), which includes a set of updated consultation principles which support, complement and enhance our current corporate consultation strategy
- Implement action plans to manage improvements identified through the 'tracker' survey of public satisfaction organised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to ensure that our services address the views and meet the expectations of residents and service users
- Undertake the third triennial 'Best Value' survey of resident satisfaction
- Build upon the existing strong links with Youth Opinions Unite (YOU) as the formal mechanism by which young people can be consulted regarding any issue that may impact directly or indirectly on their lives.

4. A fast improving council – maintaining the momentum

Following recognition through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment that Walsall Council is a 'three star' authority, which is improving well, the council and our services need to maintain our focus, and maintain our momentum towards our goal of excellence by 2008. This section of the Plan sets out the key priorities for each of our directorates during the year ahead, that will be reflected and set out in more detail in directorate, service and team plans; it also sets out how at a corporate level, and across all that we do, our focus is on transformation.

*However, whilst we move ahead, and seek to transform our services to the benefit of the community and our service users, we reaffirm our core values which will continue to guide us in our day to day work and support the council's vision of building a better borough. Our five core values of **respect, integrity, equality, listening** and **excellence** signal to everyone the beliefs, behaviours and principles that underpin all that we do. They are central to our approach, and will guide us towards our vision for the borough and its people. These shared and agreed values set out what the council stands for and how it will behave.*

We are very proud that Walsall Council is now a 'three star' council, in terms of the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), having progressed rapidly through those CPA ratings over the past three years. Our achievement has been based on commitment, a lot of hard work by every council service, all our staff, and everyone who is a part of the council, and on six key features

- clarity of vision and purpose – a shared vision and set of priorities geared to improving outcomes for local people
- building capacity – an ambitious programme of development for members, managers and staff and improving corporate governance and performance management
- developing partnerships – we have worked with key players in the public and private sectors, to consign old problems to the past, to improve services and the quality of life for local people
- attracting investment – we have worked to attract high levels of investment in our priorities
- connecting with the community – we have re-engaged with our communities to build trust and confidence, and
- improved performance across every one of our key service areas – by delivering what matters to local people.

However, the CPA is an external assessment, even if it is based on our local service delivery and takes into account the views of local people and the users of our services. It is even more pleasing that the satisfaction rates of local residents have increased too, to 56% in 2005 from 34% in 2003 – it is vital that we continue to meet the needs of local people and other users of our services, so that we can maintain, and increase further these satisfaction levels, in future surveys including the major Best Value satisfaction survey due to take place in the Autumn of 2006.

Transformational change programme

As part of our drive to further improve and optimise the way that we deliver services to the citizens of Walsall, we are shaping an internal Change Programme designed to improve the efficiency and use of Council resources, with a clear customer focus at its heart. The Council has demonstrated a significant and tangible ability to re-engineer and improve services over the past 3 years and we are committed to maintain this momentum. This will continue to be through a mixed economy of service provision, where partnership, joint ventures and commissioning, outsourcing, in-house provision and all other options for service delivery are explored, appraised, and implemented with the aim of delivering good services, value for money and continuous improvement.

Within the Council, a structured and focused programme of process re-engineering will be delivered, identifying measurable savings that will be re-invested in the provision of services, demonstrating a clear focus on value for money and the wider efficiency agenda. A small, specialised team will be working with service leaders to design and implement the necessary change and ensure that targeted activity yields results and furthers service provision on the path to 'Excellence'. Examples of this are: the re-engineering of the Council's administrative support function, a fundamental review of the delivery of the revenue and benefits service and the design and implementation of a new Procurement strategy that will deliver tangible savings to fund other areas of service improvement. In addition the 2006/7 revenue budget and capital programme contain specific investment to support ICT infrastructure improvements and the establishment of a Customer Contact Centre within the Borough.

Children and Young People

During 2006/07, the directorate will deliver excellent services so that every child and young person in Walsall is valued and matters.

We will work with partners to ensure that children and young people are supported through quality services which are increasingly effective and efficient. We will develop integrated and localised provision that promotes achievement, enjoyment, safety and well-being, healthy life styles and opportunities for all. We will assist children and young people in making a positive contribution to their own lives, the services they utilise and the communities of Walsall and wider society.

We organise all our work to deliver the 5 outcomes of Every Child Matters Agenda and 1 organisational outcome. We will ensure all Walsall children are healthy, stay safe, enjoy & achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being

We aspire to be an ambitious, well led and managed Directorate with strong partnerships with the key agencies and stakeholders of Walsall.

We will focus all our efforts on these high level objectives to ensure we deliver our vision and 6 outcomes. They will 'cascade' into all our service plans to make sure all our staff are focussed on achieving the same things.

Our priorities in 2006/07 will be to

- Reduce the incidence of abuse and neglect
- Reduce the numbers of young people placed away from Walsall
- Reduce the number of Looked After Children

- Improve services for Children with Disabilities
- Support the involvement of young people in the work of the Council through Youth Opinions Unite
- Improve involvement of vulnerable and hard to reach children and young people
- Increase the number of 11 years olds achieving level 4 or above in English and Maths
- Increase the numbers of children getting GCSE 5A*-C including English and Maths
- Reduce half days missed through absence
- We will improve the retained functions of early years
- Reduce the conception rate for under 18 year olds
- Reduce the % of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Improve post 16 education

Neighbourhood Services

During 2006/7 our priorities will be to:

- Modernise the library network so that our libraries offer the sort of modern service and quality environment which users want – and which will attract more people to libraries
- Improve the management of open spaces
- Increase participation in leisure and culture. We will aim to increase usage of all leisure and cultural facilities, especially from previously under represented groups
- Join up enforcement activity, making best use of the resources we have carrying out an enforcement or public reassurance role in conjunction with our partners
- Establish Walsall as an environmental beacon with an increasing focus on waste management, particularly recycling
- Strengthen community engagement through our local neighbourhood partnerships
- Improve customer satisfaction, with a focus on public spaces
- Improve the management of resources
- Address under investment and the legacy of under investment in the local infrastructure including highways and public buildings
- Develop strategic options for the future management of leisure centres and the highways maintenance function

Regeneration

In 2005-06, we made real progress on a range of key projects, including Shannon's Mill, the Business Learning Campus, and Moxley. We have built up a network of credible relationships with key partners. We believe we now have a more focussed approach and more robust processes. We are proud that we have stimulated range of new agendas central to the continued economic development of the borough.

Our priorities in 2006/07 will be to deliver our Vision 2008 pledges, fulfil our statutory responsibilities, and meet public expectations, focussed upon:

- Implementing a Revitalisation Programme for the main district centres of Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall
- Implementing the findings of the study into the improvement of key routes into the Borough including the A454 and A461 as part of our Gateways programme

- Continuing to improve the environment in Walsall Town Centre by completing further phases of the Quality Streets programme including the Civic Quarter.
- ensuring delivery of and input into key projects i.e. St Matthew's Quarter, the Business Learning Campus, the Waterfront and Canalside Community
- creating a step change in approach to revitalising town centres
- leading sustainable action to address worklessness, stimulating growth and investment
- influencing key regional and sub-regional agendas
- creating distinctive and memorable physical environments
- developing a coherent, strategic transport agenda
- ensuring we have an appropriate policy and strategy base
- strengthening the credibility of our partnerships and relationships

Social Care and Inclusion

During 2006/7 our priorities will be to:

Maximise health, well-being and life chances by reducing inequalities and promoting independence:

- We will deliver our assessments and services more promptly
- We will enable more people to live in their own home
- We will promote access to housing
- We will increase the availability of housing for people with specific housing needs (including extra care)

Ensure safety and protection:

- We will ensure our services safeguard the needs of users and vulnerable people
- We will respond to potential “disruptive challenge” by further developing emergency planning infrastructure

Deliver accessible services that are socially inclusive and responsive to user views:

- We will deliver services which reflect the views, needs and aspirations of local people and service users
- We will develop more locally accessible services
- We will increase our understanding of the specific needs of Black & ethnic minority citizens in order to improve services

Become an excellent employer:

- We will improve development of our staff teams to deliver more effective services
- We will improve the quality of the physical working environment
- We will take a proactive approach to workforce management

Deliver more efficient business processes:

- We will utilise information and performance management systems in order to promote a culture of continuous improvement
- We will design and implement a single pathway to directorate services and council activities
- We will deliver our medium term financial plan within budget and service parameters whilst ensuring Gershon efficiencies
- We will better manage demands and competing priorities on the organisation arising from initiatives and legislation

Ensure effective partnership work to support delivery of our shared objectives:

- We will deliver more integrated and co-ordinated services with Health partners
- We will seize new opportunities to further align Social care and Housing activity in order to improve outcomes for local people
- We will continue to develop and support partnership that deliver more effective services

Valuing equality and diversity

Valuing diversity is at the heart of the work of the Council and runs through the whole breadth of our vision and key priorities. During the last year, working with our partners, we have:

- Established a new borough wide equalities partnership within the WBSP framework
- With the Walsall Multi-faith Forum, continued to promote community cohesion through the Stand Together Against Racism (STAR) programme
- Developed a comprehensive equality and diversity strategy for the Council
- Revised our Race Equality Scheme
- Carried out equality impact assessments on key council services and functions
- Launched an improved Racist Incident reporting procedure.

In 2006-07, we will:

- Work with partners to develop a community cohesion strategy
- Develop a Welfare to Work strategy
- Establish new Disability and Gender Equality Schemes

5. Working together – delivering our Local Area Agreement

We recognise that to be successful in achieving our objectives we need to work with a wide range of other organisations including other public agencies, voluntary and community groups, and the private sector

Effective and inclusive partnerships, focussed on specific outcomes, are fundamental in enabling us to deliver our priorities and objectives. The council participates in the work of many local partnerships, formal and less formal, strategic and operational, contractual and based on pooled resources, statutory and voluntary.

Central to partnership working within the borough is the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership, established as the local strategic partnership required by law. The Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP) brings together the Council's leadership with key partners - police, health economy, housing providers, local business, community and voluntary organisations, schools and colleges. The WBSP is responsible for the borough's Community Plan, launched in September 2005 for the five years to 2010, and, jointly with the council, for the Local Area Agreement (LAA), which will help deliver that plan.

The Community Plan, and the LAA, both reflect the WBSP's long term goal "to create an inclusive, prosperous and competitive Borough, in which our diverse communities feel involved, safer and healthier". The LAA develops this by identifying a set of key outcomes that we want to achieve. These are set out below, grouped under the four themes or 'pillars' of our LAA which is scheduled to be in place and 'live' by April 2006.

Children and Young People

- Being healthy: tackling teenage conception, childhood obesity, infant mortality and improving access to services for vulnerable young people
- Staying safe: tackling incidences of abuse and neglect
- Enjoy and achieve: tackling school absence, raising achievement numbers getting A* to C at GCSE
- Making a positive contribution: tackling youth re-offending, improving lives of Looked after children
- Making a contribution: increasing numbers of 16-18 year olds in employment, education or training

Safer Stronger Communities

- Reducing overall crime: tackling domestic violence, criminal damage, business related crime, crime in town and district centre
- Reducing fear of crime: tackling Anti-social behaviour, building feeling of community safety, reducing numbers of fires and arson
- Reduce harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol: more people receiving treatment
- Improve community cohesion: increase numbers of people who report getting on well with neighbours
- Community leadership and active citizens: increase numbers taking part in LNPs, establish community fora, increased capacity of voluntary and community sectors

- Cleaner, greener Walsall: waste minimisation, increase environmental awareness, more sustainable travel, increase user satisfaction with parks and green spaces

Healthy Communities and Older People

- Improved health of the population: increase life expectancy, reduce mortality rates from cancer strokes and heart disease, increase number of smoking quitters, reduce number of falls, developing expert patient and health trainer programmes
- Improving quality of life and independence: reduce number of emergency bed days, reduce care admissions and increase direct payments and speed of provision of adaptations, make workplaces healthier, increase physical activity of the population, decent homes for vulnerable people.
- Promoting social inclusion: improve access to services by people from black and other minority ethnic groups, increase day sessions for people with learning difficulties, reduction in number of low birth weight babies in Walsall.

Economic Development and Enterprise

- Increase economic growth: increasing earning, numbers of business growing, more VAT registered businesses
- Increase employment and reduce unemployment: close gap between Walsall and England and West Midlands and, within Walsall, focus initiatives on groups and individuals not accessing the job market
- More competitive town and district centres: reduce number of vacant shop units, increase shopping centre yields
- Support sustainable growth of locally owned businesses: increased business confidence, increase amount of public sector procurement within Walsall
- Increase skill levels with reference to business need: job related training, increase skill levels of population
- Increase total entrepreneurial activity amongst the local population: more enterprises created, community based ICT infrastructure developed
- Physical regeneration of borough linked to previously economically inactive residents
- Attracting appropriate inward investment to the borough

Under all these headings there are a series of specific measures to enable us to identify our success. Additionally a numbers of the targets have been identified for Performance Reward where, subject to delivering substantial agreed improvements over and above our original intentions, central government will pay up to £8.56m reward grant.

Our Local Compact - working with community and voluntary organisations

Central to our Agreement, and to our approach to partnership working within the WBSP and generally, are community and voluntary groups, and the role of the community generally. Local Neighbourhood Partnerships will make sure that the impact of the Local Area Agreement is experienced at a very local level, just as working through the WBSP and with the community through the Community Empowerment Network and Walsall Voluntary Action, we are confident that our LAA reflects issues and concerns that are key to local people.

At the same time that our Community Plan was launched, the WBSP also launched the renewed and expanded Local Compact. This is an agreement between public services

including the council, the local NHS, and others, with the community and voluntary sector, operating within the framework provided by the WBSP. It has been developed by joint working between the agencies, and will help ensure effective joint working towards our common goals and vision for the borough of Walsall. The Compact provides clear standards and makes clear the way in which we should work together. It includes a set of detailed policy statement on effective joint working in terms of information and communication, consultation and engagement, funding issues, volunteering, learning and development, and in respect of disability organisations and black & minority ethnic community organisations. The council is fully committed to the Local Compact, and will work during the year ahead to ensure that the principles of the Compact are reflected in all that we do.

6. Making effective use of our resources

Our budget and capital programme are constructed in accordance with the principles set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS); an integral aspect of our Corporate Integrated Planning & Performance Framework (CIPPF). This robust way of working has been in place for several years and governs our policy-led, medium term approach to financial planning and management. The MTFS contains eight key objectives that demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that financial activities contribute to the transformation, development and improvement of the organisation, and that the budget enables delivery of our priorities, vision, aims objectives and pledges and stable, sustainable financial health.

Consultation

Managers are accountable for delivering services to standard, on time and within budget, and are involved in constructing the base budget, bidding for investment and in working up savings options. Cabinet and EMT lead the budget process and fully participate throughout. Budget consultation takes place with a wide range of stakeholders; residents, service users, business and third sector representatives, employees and unions, and informs the process. Scrutiny panels examine the draft budget twice and their views are taken into account by cabinet before making a final recommendation to full Council. Risk management principles have been used throughout.

Delivering the vision

The budget and each investment and efficiency option is assessed as to its contribution or impact on delivery of the vision, the pledges and on service performance and quality. Capital investment is determined from the appraisal of capital proposal forms submitted by services and assessed against a similar framework and in accordance with the capital strategy.

Headlines for 2006/7

- The revenue budget is £362.317m
- The Band D council tax will be £1,202.52; a 3.94% increase over last year
- Efficiencies of £5.968 m and other savings of £2.497 m will be implemented
- This has funded investment of £2.904 m and corporate pressures of £3.5 m
- Opening general reserves will be £4.6 m in line with the MTFS
- Central contingency will be £371k in line with the MTFS
- Funding for education is now through a Dedicated Schools Grant of £158.28 m
- The capital programme totals £67.985 m, comprising mainstream schemes of £27.344 m and grant funded projects of £40.641m
- This will be funded by £9.845 m supported borrowing, £7.219 m of unsupported borrowing (Prudential Code) £10.28 m of capital receipts and £40.641 m of capital grants
- A leasing programme of £10.348m will be implemented.

Efficiency and value for money

The 2006/7 budget will fully deliver our Gershon efficiency targets and demonstrate value for money.

More information

The CIPPF, MTFS, capital strategy, revenue budget and capital programme provide extensive details on the issues summarised in this section of the plan.

7. Making things happen – our performance management framework

We recognise that robust and comprehensive performance management is essential in delivering service and corporate excellence. The purpose of performance management is to raise and maintain at a high level the performance levels of individuals, services and the authority as a whole to ensure that we deliver high quality, cost effective services. Performance management will make a significant contribution in delivering the council's vision of excellence by 2008.

The performance management framework set out in the diagram presents key elements of the process clearly and simply. This framework will be refined and developed over time with the assistance of our partners.

It is recognised that strategic risk management, as a corporate self diagnostic tool, provides demonstrable evidence of the organisation's capacity to improve. Hence risk management is an integral part of every planning process within this framework.

The diagram illustrates the relationship between the various elements that when jointly managed ensure continuous improvement and effective service delivery. Delivery of our vision for the borough of Walsall is managed through the various elements outlined in the diagram.

As with all council functions and policies, equality is a key foundation within our performance management framework and features within our service planning and individual performance management processes.

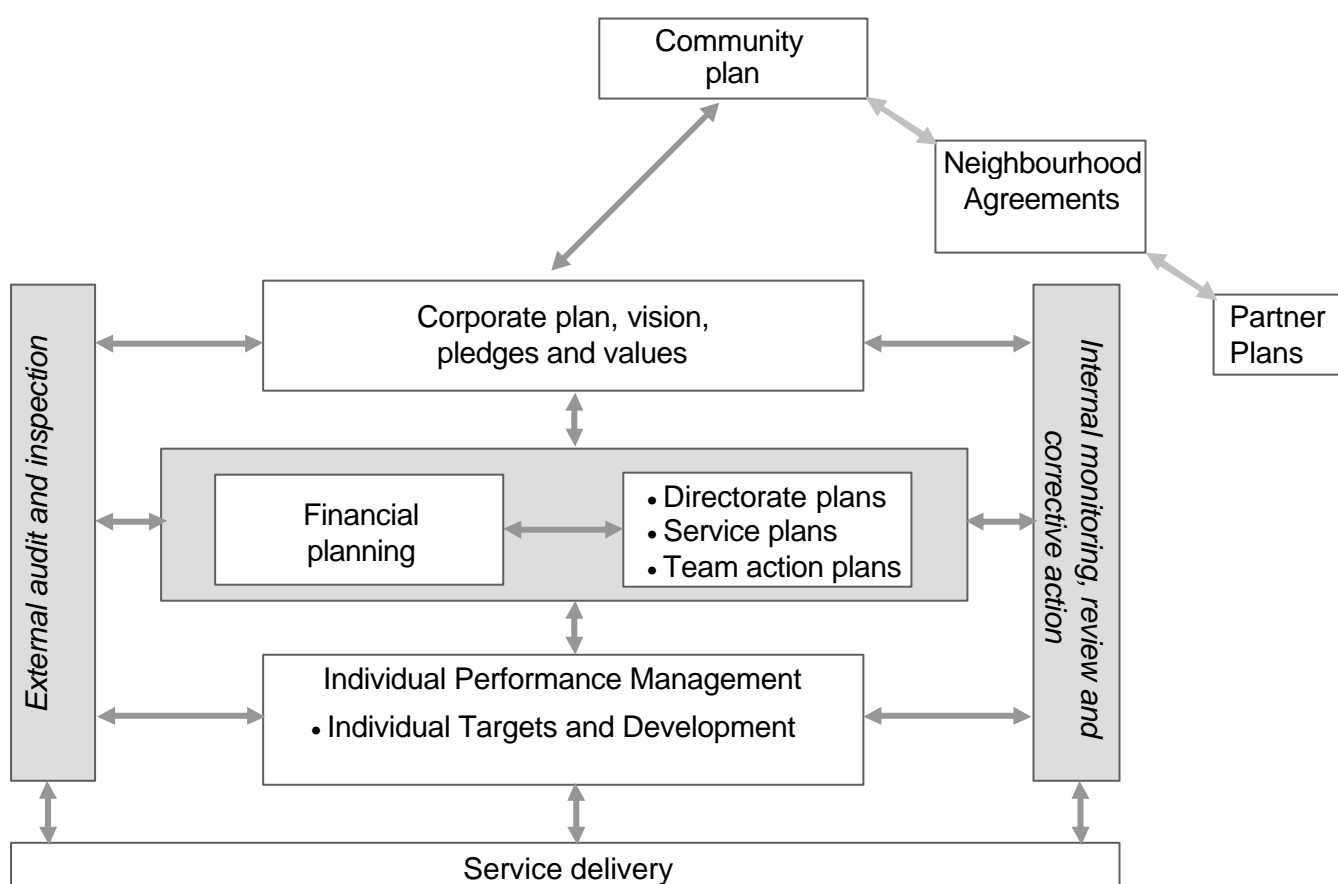
Performance management processes

1. Community Plan
The overarching influence is the community plan and our relationship with the community and our partners. The community plan outlines the aspirations of the communities of Walsall which are further interpreted by our own Vision, priorities and pledges.
2. This Corporate Plan, and other council plans
The council has a hierarchy of plans to ensure that high level corporate priorities are translated into more detailed plans throughout the organisation. This includes:
 - The corporate plan – the main priorities and pledges for the council to achieve the vision and develop an excellent local authority
 - Directorate plans – how each directorate will contribute towards the corporate plan
 - Service and team plans – more detailed plans for individual council services and teams, setting out specific targets and improvements

In addition, the council prepares a wide range of plans and strategies, statutory and non-statutory, specific to a service, function or policy area. Many of these plans are produced in partnership with other local organisations, or with other local councils in the Black Country or West Midlands.

3. **Financial planning**
This encompasses all financial decision making processes from the medium term financial plan and strategic choices exercises through to the annual budget setting process and the individual management of budgets at service level. Linked in with the service planning processes is the delivery and evidencing of efficiency savings and value for money.
- 4 **Individual Performance Management Plans**
This is the process for the performance management of individuals and translates the priorities from the service and team plans into individual targets. This sets out what is expected from individual employees and how each individual contributes to the priorities for their service area and the overall council vision priorities.

Diagram 2 - Performance Management Framework



5. External
Audit and inspections are a key process for assessing the performance of a service or function and for identifying ways improvements can be made. External inspections, for example the CPA, also provide an opportunity to benchmark the performance of the council against other authorities and to share best practice.
6. Internal monitoring, review and corrective action
The continual monitoring, review and implementation of required corrective action is vital to ensure continuous improvement and is done at every level of the financial, service and individual planning processes. Progress and performance of the key corporate priorities, as set out in this plan, will be monitored quarterly by the Executive Management Team and Cabinet as well as being subject to regular member scrutiny through the Beacon Index.

8. Sources of further information

The council produces a wide range of information, including other key plans and strategies, as described in chapter 7. Details of these plans can be found on the **council's web site**, www.walsall.gov.uk, or obtained from the service concerned.

Of particular note is the council's annual **Performance Plan**, which is produced in June each year and contains a wide range of key performance information relating to our services. This is supplemented by the quarterly progress reports on key performance targets, including the council's pledges, set out in our Beacon Index reports.

Also available is the **Community Plan**, published as a five year strategy to 2010 by the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership. This is available on the WBSP's own web site at www2.walsall.gov.uk/wbsp, along with a range of other information on the Borough Strategic Partnership.

Also available on our web site are full details relating to the **council's decision making processes**, including the council's **constitution**, and details of the role of the cabinet, the scrutiny & performance panels, the standards committee and regulatory committees for development control and licensing, and at a local level the nine local neighbourhood partnerships. Details of **forthcoming meetings**, as well as reports and minutes, are available on the web site, at www2.walsall.gov.uk/CMISwebpublic as are details relating to elected **councillors**, their electoral wards and local 'surgeries'. Details can also be obtained from local libraries.

The council operates in accordance with the **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)** and related legislation. Information held by the council and by council services which is not already available publicly can be requested in line with the FOIA, and the council will respond within 20 working days. In some instances, where the council may be unable to release information, a reason will be provided. For more information, visit the council web site at www.walsall.gov.uk.